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Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. On 31 October 2001, the General Assembly adopted resolution 56/29, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region", by which, inter alia, it called upon all States of the Mediterranean region that had not yet done so to adhere to all the multilaterally negotiated legal instruments related to the field of disarmament and non-proliferation and encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters, by participating, inter alia, in the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures and by providing accurate data and information to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. The Assembly also encouraged the Mediterranean countries to strengthen further their cooperation in combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, taking into account the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, and in combating international crime and illicit arms transfers and illicit drug production, consumption and trafficking, which pose a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the region and therefore to the improvement of the current political, economic and social situation and which jeopardize friendly relations among States, hinder the development of international cooperation and result in the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the democratic basis of pluralistic society. Furthermore, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on means to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request and on the basis of information received from Member States.

2. In this connection, a note verbale dated 20 February 2002 was sent to all Member States requesting their views. To date the Governments of Algeria, Qatar and Tunisia have replied, and their responses are reproduced in chapter II below. Any replies received subsequently will be issued as addenda to the present report.

II. Replies received from Governments

A. Algeria

[Original: French]
[22 April 2002]

3. Algeria fully supports the objectives and activities contemplated by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/29 of 29 November 2001, entitled "Strengthening of security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region". Algeria has always cooperated and participated in all projects and initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue, concerted action and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, since this reflects a strategic decision that Algeria intends to implement fully. This attitude is proof of its firm conviction that only a genuine partnership can help to establish an area of stability and security in the Mediterranean region and promote an area of common development and prosperity. It is in this spirit that Algeria has become involved in the process, which seeks to establish a framework for renewed partnership.

4. The Barcelona Declaration laid the foundation for a new relationship between the two sides of the Mediterranean based on partnership and common interests. The various conferences held as part of the Barcelona process provided a strong political stimulus to relations in the Euro-Mediterranean area by giving it a comprehensive, balanced and multidimensional approach based on the necessary balance between the three parts of the Barcelona Declaration.

5. The question of terrorism has also been taken up by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and, since the events of 11 September 2001, special emphasis has been placed on the operational aspects of combating terrorism and organized crime, and numerous avenues of cooperation in this area have been identified by States in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

6. Algeria wishes to reaffirm its commitment to this process and to similar cooperation mechanisms currently in effect, which, in its view, are valuable tools for establishing peace, security and shared prosperity in the Mediterranean, and hopes that the credibility of this partnership in terms of its approach and results will be strengthened.

7. Algeria considers that peace and stability in the Mediterranean region are prerequisites for economic and social development. The establishment of confidence-building measures to strengthen peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean region must be based on the implementation of just and lasting solutions to conflicts, respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and concrete, effective disarmament measures, including, inter alia, the accession of all States of the region to the multilateral agreements banning nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (such as the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Convention on Chemical Weapons and the Biological Weapons Convention) and the submission of all their nuclear installations to international monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

8. Transparency in armaments is another valuable tool for creating a climate of confidence in the Mediterranean region. It should also be aimed at preventing the destabilizing accumulation of weapons of all types. Algeria, while recognizing the importance of these objectives, considers that national sovereignty and the right of States to preserve their security and to enjoy undiminished security are also important. Measures to enhance transparency must be consensual, non-discriminatory and complete.

9. Security and stability in the Mediterranean also depend on the conduct of an implacable campaign against the illicit trade in small arms, which exacerbates conflicts and encourages terrorism and transnational crime.

10. The political and security partnership should be based on the littoral States' shared political will to take up common challenges in a spirit of solidarity through respect for the principles enshrined in international law, especially those of non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, the non-use of force or the threat of force and respect for sovereignty. This would help to strengthen democracy, consolidate the rule of law and eliminate new types of threats to peace and security, in particular the scourge of terrorism and transnational organized crime. These problems have become so widespread that they have become a serious threat to peace, security and stability in the Mediterranean region, and particularly in the States of the southern shore.

11. Owing to its transnational character, terrorism continues to pose a serious threat to the security and stability of the region, to State institutions and to the rule of law. For this reason, it requires the sustained coordination and cooperation of all the Mediterranean countries, which must take all necessary steps to eliminate it. Algeria, which has long suffered the agonies of terrorism, believes that this phenomenon must be prevented and fought through closer cooperation at both the regional and international levels. In that regard, Algeria has repeatedly called in various international forums for concrete, mutually supportive and joint action by the international community to combat this scourge. Our country has also signed and ratified all of the United Nations conventions on terrorism.

12. International criminality and, in particular, corruption should also receive particular attention, inasmuch as they seriously impede all the efforts of States to initiate their economic take-off. For that reason, at the sixth Conference of Ministers of the Interior of Western Mediterranean Countries, held at Lisbon on 29 and 30 June 2000, Algeria called for reflection on the adoption of a mechanism for combating large-scale corruption. To that end, Algeria expresses its support for the convening of an international conference on this phenomenon.

13. With regard to economic and financial partnership, Algeria stresses the need to reduce development disparities between the two sides of the Mediterranean and, in this connection, calls for a strengthening of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership financial programme for the period from 2000 to 2006 (MEDA II). Algeria also advocates the promotion of foreign direct investment flows and their just and equitable distribution among countries of the region. In that connection, it welcomes the forthcoming establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean development bank, which represents an important achievement of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

14. Algeria also calls for a review of the debt issue and debt cancellation and relief, including for middle-income countries, and the possibility of debt-equity swaps. Clearly, what is taking place is the establishment of new economic relations and the promotion of a partnership for development. The free-trade area should not be an end in itself but rather a means of achieving the more ambitious objective of creating an area of shared prosperity.

15. With respect to the partnership in social, cultural and human affairs, Algeria considers that there can be no free-trade area, presumably involving the unhampered flow of goods and services, unless the important issue of the movement of persons is taken into consideration.

16. The human dimension is of primary importance within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership today, given the scale of the movement of people between the two shores of the Mediterranean, on the one hand, and the presence of a large community of mainly Maghreb origin legally established in European States, on the other. Algeria therefore welcomes the implementation of the regional cooperation programme, within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, in the area of justice and home affairs, which seeks to come up with practical measures for strengthening cooperation relating to the movement of people and for ensuring the free movement of people within the Mediterranean region.

17. Algeria is strongly convinced of the importance of the Mediterranean Forum, which provides a useful framework for coordination and dialogue. Owing to its informal nature, that mechanism can make a significant contribution to other regional mechanisms, in particular the Barcelona process. It gives member countries an opportunity to consider political and security problems and economic, social and cultural issues in the region.

18. The political and security partnership in the Mediterranean region has not experienced any significant change because of the impasse in the Middle East peace process and the tragic events unfolding in the occupied territories.

19. Algeria has naturally been paying close attention to that situation and believes that the establishment of peace in the region will necessarily result in an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to establish their State with Al-Quds as its capital, along with guarantees for the return of refugees.

20. Algeria remains committed to the Middle East peace process and to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region. The advent of this peace can only strengthen security and stability in the Mediterranean, to the benefit of all the peoples of the region.

21. Within this same framework of cooperation and dialogue in the Mediterranean region, which Algeria has always supported, the fifth Conference of Ministers of the Interior of Western Mediterranean Countries, in which Algeria, France, Italy, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia participated, was held at Algiers on 20 and 24 June 1999. The holding in June 2000 of the sixth Conference at Lisbon and the important decisions taken at that meeting demonstrate the usefulness and value of this framework for coordination, which is another milestone in the effort to strengthen security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region.

22. Algeria also welcomes the fact that the Five Plus Five framework for dialogue and cooperation was reactivated at the Lisbon ministerial meeting.

B. Qatar

[Original: English]
[29 May 2002]

23. The State of Qatar supports all appropriate procedures and measures that guarantee international peace and security.

C. Tunisia

[Original: French]
[21 May 2002]

24. Since the Barcelona Declaration of November 1995, Tunisia has been working within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, based on close cooperation among the 27 countries of the southern and northern shores of the Mediterranean.

25. It is making an active contribution in all areas of cooperation in the partnership — in the political and security, economic and financial, and social, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

26. The latest stage of this cooperation was the convening of the fifth Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 27 partner countries at Valencia, Spain, on 22 and 23 April 2002.

27. The Conference resulted in the adoption of a plan of action for the three components of the partnership, intended to revitalize and further strengthen cooperation.

28. It should be noted that in the plan of action, the political and security partnership includes measures to strengthen political dialogue. In addition, it envisages active cooperation in the areas of terrorism, human rights and democracy, and measures to promote the partnership.

29. Furthermore, the Conference approved a cooperation programme in the areas of justice, combating drugs, organized crime and terrorism, and cooperation in the social integration of migrants, migration and movement of persons.

30. This programme covers everything having to do with questions of peace, security and stability in the Euro-Mediterranean region and has set as specific goals the improvement of the security situation and the strengthening of cooperation among Mediterranean countries against terrorism.